1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

Kinship groupings: *olusе* and *olusina*.[1] Every Ocimbundu belongs to an *olusе*, i.e. his father's kin, and to an *olusina*, i.e. his mother's kin. Each of these family groupings is divided into male and female lines (*onthi yokongi*, 'the side of the bow'; *onthi yokumba*, 'the side of the basket'). Uterine brothers and sisters belong to the same *olusе* and *olusina*, and to the male or female 'side' respectively, according to sex. It is of great importance to get a clear idea of this bilateral nature of these kinship groupings. Every student of ethnology will note the similarity of this division to the Herero *oruzo* and *eanda*.[2] Considering the affinities between the Herero and Umbundu languages, I think that these conceptions are probably related. Further study of other peoples of this Western Bantu zone may reveal cultural and racial as well as linguistic affinities.[3] The *olusе* and *olusina* of the Ovimbundu follow their own pattern.

The *olusе* consists of a large number of local village groups, some of which recognize mutual relationships, but with no recognized headship save in the case of the several royal families. The only suggestion of any totemic relation or origin is with the royal families which have in common several taboos with regard to certain animals the flesh of which may not be eaten, nor the skins used, &c. Chief of these animals are the *ongulungu* (bushbuck, *Tragelaphus scriptus*), the *ocisema*[4] (the waterbuck, *Cobus defessa*

[1] *Olu-se*, perhaps 'the place of father', the root *se* being equivalent to the forms *sa*, *so*, *isia*; *olu-ina*, perhaps 'the place of mother'.

[2] See Vedder, pp. 185 ff. (in *The Native Tribes of South West Africa*): 'The Herero nation is divided into a large family groups . . . the Herero belongs to the *oruzo* of his father and also to the *eanda* of his mother.' J. Irle, *Die Herero* (Gutersloh, 1906), pp. 87–93.

[3] An interesting study of the VaNyaneka, one of the cattle-rearing people living between Ambo and Umbundu territory, was recently published: A. Lang et C. Tastevin, *La Tribu des Va-Nyaneka* (Mission Rohan-Chabot, Tome V), Corbeil: Impr. Crété. This volume was not available in England or the U.S.A. until 1940, and could not therefore have been used in the present study. I may now say, however, that the authors' treatment of the social structure is not such that it would help to solve the problem in question. The clans are described only from the standpoint of totemism. The maternal line of descent (*e-anda*) is briefly mentioned (p. 45), but not the corresponding paternal line. The authors' evident lack of familiarity with other Bantu material is a great drawback. The system used for the transcription of the vernacular is most confusing, owing to an evident lack of understanding of the Bantu phonetic and grammatical genius with consequent procrustean attempts to force it into foreign forms.

[4] The king's sons may not eat flesh of the *ocisema* lest they should *sema sema*, 'have an impediment of speech'. This may be simply a taboo on grounds of [illegible] (or the absence)

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

penricei), and *ovinyama viakasa* (animals having paws, from the lion down). No other *oluse* has any such rules. The chief function of the *oluse* is as a local residence group. Within the *oluse* there is no inheritance of property but only succession to office, which from the king to the village headman is from father to son, or from elder to younger brother, with only as much recognition of primogeniture as belongs to the general idea of the hierarchy of age. Succession to office is further affected by the democratic tendencies already noted with regard to the kingly succession.[1] The character of the *oluse* as a series of local groups is further borne out by the character of its priesthood, which lies wholly with the village headmen.

The *oluina* is not a local group, since its members for the most part live in the villages of their several lines of paternal descent—each with his *oluse*. When an Ocimbundu speaks of his family (*epata*) in the sense of a large and widespread organization with a recognized head in some elder, it is generally his *oluina* to which he refers. This family elder (*ukulu wepata*) is generally both the legal and spiritual head of the family. He is the family high-priest in charge of the spirit-hut (*etambo*) of the family guardian spirit (*osande*)[2] of whom there may be more than one and of whom he may become one after death. This family head is generally the eldest in the maternal line. In these days the priestly and the legal functions may be divided considering the advantages of having for legal head one who knows the ways of this world, while the spiritual head needs rather to be acquainted with the spirit-world. Property is inherited through the *oluina* from mother's brother to sister's son.[3] Only the *oluina* is an organization in the wider or more than local sense, and it is to it that the children belong. Formerly the mother's elder brother had great powers over his sister's sons and was even able to pawn them or sell them into slavery to meet his own debts.[4] The patrilocal household is

[1] See *supra*, p. 22 f.

[2] The head of an *oluina* may or may not be a village headman. In case he is, he will be priest of two lines and have two spirit-huts. There may be more than one spirit-hut in a single village.

[3] This fact was noted by A. Bastos, *Traços Geraes sôbre a Ethnografia do Districto de Benguella* (Lisboa, 1909), p. 33 (par. 39°).

[4] This has been noted by a number of writers. Bastos, op. cit., p. 29 (par. 26°) adds that once a father has redeemed his son, the maternal uncle can never sell him again. Cf. *avunculi potestas* among the Ba-Ila, E. W. Smith and A. M. Dale, *The Ila-Speaking Peoples* (London, 1920), vol. i, p. 320.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

responsible for the children, especially during their early years, but they are frequently sent 'to the *oluina*', i.e. to the mother's brother for at least a part of their education. Herein has arisen a conflict between the claims of the paternal household and the maternal kinship group. Economic and other forces seem to have favoured the former so that 'During these days in which we stand, things have changed somewhat so that as between children and their parents, they work for their fathers for they say, "A child is strong with his *oluse* and less so with his *oluina*." Nowadays a man teaches a child work and also looks out for his education that he may advance properly. His mother's brothers (*va inanu*) have no longer much power as of old.'[1]

Bearing in mind their bilateral nature and the fact that every Ocimbundu belongs at the same time to his paternal (*oluse*) and to his maternal (*oluina*) groups, the functions of these kinship groups may be summarized as follows:

Oluse	*Oluina*
SOCIAL	
Consists of local residence units; succession of village and tribal offices from father to son, or elder to younger brother.	Extended family organization; office of family head descends from mother's brother to sister's son; children belong.
Marriage allowed between cross-cousins and other relatives of non-parallel descent; couple lives at groom's father's village.	*Marriage preferred* between cross-cousins and other relatives of non-parallel descent; children belong to mother's *oluina*.
EDUCATIONAL	
Responsibility for education of young children, especially in social usage.	Responsibility sometimes assumed in later childhood, especially for technical phases.
ECONOMIC	
Ownership and inheritance of land. (Passed from father to son or elder to younger brother.)	Ownership and inheritance of more largely negotiable and movable property, as e.g. trade goods, cattle, &c. (passed from mother's brother to sister's son).

[1] Raul Kavita Evambi, op. cit.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

Oluse	*Olunia*
RELIGIOUS	
Regular village worship including agricultural festivals; village headman is also priest.	Family observances including occasional propitiations in case of illness, death, or other misfortunes; for desired economic advantages; mortuary rites. Family head is also priest.

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Classificatory System of Relationship. The relationships of the wider kinship groups are quite largely extensions of those of the household, but the Ovimbundu, in common with all people who have a classificatory system, extend these relationships not only further but in quite different ways than do those who have the European (Roman) system. One who would understand the Ovimbundu must understand the Umbundu family from the inside—not as from motives of mere intellectual curiosity but as an Ocimbundu understands it. In order to demonstrate this family structure it will be necessary to present tables and diagrams. Hambly did a very creditable piece of work toward demonstrating the structure of the Umbundu family.[1] I doubt that anyone staying among them an equally short period of time, not knowing their language, could have done better in this respect unless he had come to the task with very exceptional preparation. It is only just to state this and I feel that it is necessary because so far as I am aware, in the five years since it was published, the book has received no adequate appraisal or review.[2] It must be said, however, that Hambly made some noticeable errors in his use of kinship terms owing to the fact that he did not learn the Umbundu language, and that he evidently failed to understand certain points with regard to the social structure.

For greater clarity and precision I am presenting in separate tables the terms which refer to blood relationship and those which refer to relationship by marriage.

[1] W. D. Hambly, op. cit., pp. 189–99.

[2] This book was reviewed in *Africa*, 1935, pp. 391–3, but the reviewer had no first-hand knowledge of the people or their language, which was perhaps his reason for taking up three-fourths of the space at his disposal with questions of orthography. E. W. Smith has taken note of the book (*Africa: What Do We Know of It?*, p. 71), but only to say that it 'is chiefly useful for its description of the material culture'.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

182 621 in a somewhat decadent state, the Umbundu village has up to the present maintained its status as a local kinship unit.

182 592 602 The household is not a solitary unit but a part of the village. Since it is constituted by marriage, it embodies the union of at least two kinship groups. The attitudes and behaviour patterns within the Umbundu household are basically those universally recognized. In common with the households of most Bantu cultures, it differs from the European model in that it extends its attitudes and behaviour patterns to the wider kinship groupings by means of a classificatory system of relationship.

613 182 In the wider kinship groupings (*epata*), the Ovimbundu recognize both the maternal (*oluina*) and the paternal (*oluse*) lines of descent. The functions of the latter have been largely local, residential, social, and religious, with succession (of status) in the male line. The function of the former has been cohesive over a larger territory, with a recognized head in whom has been vested both religious and economic functions. Both his office and the inheritance of property descend in the female line. Much of the power, economic and personal, formerly held by the *oluina*, in the person of the mother's brother, seems to be passing at the present time to the *oluse*, in the person of the father. The bilineal kinship system has been a strongly cohesive social force.

182 [582] The form of marriage practised by the Ovimbundu is of the two-way cross-cousin type in both lines of kin and in three generations. It seems to be an individual type developed in the particular social and economic situation of the Ovimbundu. As a contract between two families and as a new venture, the marriage relation demands that great attention be given to attitudes and behaviour patterns which emphasize mutual respect.

[561] The hierarchy of age is a very real factor in the Umbundu social structure. Age-set 'schools' have not existed generally throughout the tribes, but there are associations of coevals. This is largely a cohesive force.

754 Sorcery is the most important disruptive force at work *within* Umbundu society. Working as it does, within kinship groups, and inasmuch as it seems to be on the increase, sorcery embodies a real danger to social cohesion.

184 178 Homogeneity has never been an attribute of the Ovimbundu as regards their racial or cultural make-up. The slave-trade injected other and more diverse elements, and recent movements and

there was a great metal industry in Viye, where hoes were made for trade with the interior; later the wholesale manufacture of hoes was taken over by Ndulu, where there are the best and most easily accessible deposits of iron. In exchange for hoes they received palm-oil or cattle from other regions, or salt, rum, or goods from the coast. Other regional specialisations were :- Kasongi and the Sele country for palm-oil, Cikuma for beeswax, cattle from Ngalangi, Kalukembe, and, further south, corn-meal from Ciyaka, Civula and Bailundu.(1)

SOCIAL ORGANISATION AND POLITICAL STRUCTURE

KINSHIP AND DESCENT

The Ovimbundu appear to have a system of double descent which has not yet been fully reported and analysed, and whose nature is not very clear from existing accounts. The following outline is based on information given by Childs,(2) who unfortunately details the functions but not the composition of the kin groups concerned. In a review(3) of Childs' book, Barnes has formulated a descent system which would be congruent with Childs' description, and his suggestions are outlined here.

The epata

Childs translates *epata* as "blood relatives", and his use of the term suggests that it may have either a general or a limited sense. Thus he writes (p.42): "Nearly all of the villagers belong to the same *epata* or extended family, which includes both lines of descent. Most of them belong to the father's family *(oluse)*, and the mother's family *(oluina)* may also be represented." And, in another context, (p.44): "When an Ocimbundu speaks of his *epata* (family) in the sense of a large and widespread organization with a recognized head....it is generally his *oluina* [mother's family] to which he refers."

The oluse and the oluina

Every Ocimbundu belongs in the first instance to two distinct kin groupings: the *oluse*, to whom he is related through his father, and the *oluina* to whom he is related through his mother. Uterine brothers and sisters belong to the same *oluse* and *oluina*, but to the male and female side respectively, according to sex. (see below.) A difficulty has arisen because both Hambly(4) and Childs appear to regard *both groups* as bilateral. Hambly states explicitly that the *oluse*, or *epata lia tate* (family of my father) includes *all* relatives on the father's side, and the *oluina* or *epata lia nai* (family of my mother) *all* relatives on the mother's side. Childs writes (p.45) "Bearing in mind *their bilateral nature* ..... the functions of [the *oluse* and the *oluina*] may be summarised...". But from his summary it is obvious that the *oluse* and the *oluina* cannot be bilateral groups, neither can they have parallel descent systems of any kind. Marriage is patrilocal, and the *oluse* forms a local unit while the *oluina* is

(1) Childs, 1949, p.205.
(2) 1949, pp.42-6.
(3) Man, September 1950, p.127.
(4) Op.cit., pp.191-2.

611 dispersed. Both groups have ritual leaders, whose offices are quite dis-
613 tinct. Barnes' suggestion(1) is that the two groups must be father's patrilineage and mother's matrilineage, with the qualification mentioned below.

613 The *oluse* consists of a large number of village groups, some of which
622 recognise mutual relationship,(2) but with no recognised head (other than the village headmen) except in the case of the royal families. Land is owned by the *oluse* and passed on within it from father to son, or from
[428] elder to younger brother. Succession to village or tribal office, from village headman to king, descends in the same way.(3) Ritual leadership
[346] within the *oluse* lies with the village headman, who is in charge of the spirit-hut *(etambo)* of the guardian spirit of the village (or of the nuclear *oluse* within the village), and who officiates at regular village worship, including agricultural festivals.

613 The *oluina*, on the other hand, is a dispersed and apparently larger
428 group, whose members live with their various paternal lines of descent. The size of the *oluina* is unknown; Childs merely refers to it as a "large
604 and widespread organization, with a recognized head". The office of head of the *oluina (ukulu wepata)* descends from mother's brother to sister's son. Negotiable and moveable property, including cattle and trade goods, is owned by the *oluina* and inherited by the sister's son. Formerly the mother's elder brother had great powers over his sister's sons, and was even able to pawn them or sell them into slavery, to meet his own debts.
[542] The patrilocal household is usually responsible for training children, especially during their early years, but they are frequently sent to the *oluina* (i.e. to the mother's brother) for at least a part of their educa-
[586] tion. At death or divorce of parents, children go to the *oluina*.

613 The head *(ukulu wepata)* of the *oluina* is usually both the legal and spiritual head of the group, although today the two functions are often
782 divided. He is in charge of the spirit hut *(etambo)* of the guardian spirit of the *oluina* (of whom there may be more than one, and of whom he becomes one after death). He leads the *oluina* in propitiatory rituals carried out in case of illness, death, or other misfortunes within the group, or in prayers made for desired economic advantages. (Apparently no regular rituals are carried out by the *oluina*.) The *ukulu wepata* may or may not be at the same time a village headman; if he is, he will be priest of two lines and have charge of two spirit huts; if he is not, there may be two (or more) priests in the village, each in charge of the spirit-hut of his *oluse* or *oluina*.

The onẽlẽ yohonji and the onẽlẽ yohumba

613 The *oluse* and the *oluina* are both divided into male and female
602 "sides": the *onẽlẽ yohonji* (the side of the bow) and the *onẽlẽ yohumba* (the side of the basket). It has been noted above that uterine brothers
582 and sisters belong to the same *oluse* and *oluina*, but to the male or female side in each, according to sex. The composition of these "sides" is

(1) Loc.cit.
(2) If some villages within the *oluse* cannot trace mutual relationship, the *oluse* should perhaps be called a patri-clan rather than a patrilineage.
(3) But see below, p.29.

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however not at all clear. They seem to group simply all the male members and all the female members of the *oluse* and of the *oluina*; but this conflicts with the information given on marriage.(1) A man may marry into the male side of his mother's kin or into the female side of his father's kin. Hence there must be some women in the male side, and, presumably, some men in the female side. A man cannot marry a parallel cousin, but he may marry:

(a) a father's sister. She presumably belongs to the female side of the *oluse*, which presents no difficulty.

(b) a sister's daughter. She appears to belong to the female side of ego's mother's kin, while a man should marry into the male side of his mother's kin.

(c) a female cross-cousin. If the *oluse* and the *oluina* were merely father's patrilineage and mother's matrilineage, as has been suggested, cross-cousins are excluded from both groups. In a footnote,(2) however, Childs seems to imply that mother's brother's daughter belongs to ego's mother's kin. Barnes therefore suggests that children of men of the matrilineage may be included in the *oluina*, falling into the male side irrespective of sex, and similarly the *oluse* may include in the female side all the children of women of the patrilineage. By this hypothesis:

(a) a sister's daughter would fall into the female side of ego's *oluse*.

(b) a mother's brother's daughter would fall into the male side of ego's *oluina*.

(c) a father's sister's daughter would fall into the female side of the *oluse*.

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The descent system: summary

The descent system suggested may then be summarised thus:

(1) *oluse* (father's kin)

(a) *onĕlĕ yohonji* (male side): all men in the patrilineage.

(b) *onĕlĕ yohumbo* (female side): all women in the patrilineage, and all sons and daughters of women in the patrilineage.

(2) *oluina* (mother's kin)

(a) *onĕlĕ yohumbo* (female side): all women in the matrilineage.

(b) *onĕlĕ yohonji* (male side): all men in matrilineage, and all sons and daughters of all men in the matrilineage.

According to this hypothesis every person belongs to four distinct groups. A man must belong not only to the male side of the two groups centred in the father's patrilineage and the mother's matrilineage, but also to the male side of his father's matrilineal group and to the female side of his mother's patrilineal group. There are still only two systems

(1) Childs, op.cit., p.53. (2) P.53, fn.3.

611 of groups, but a man belongs to two groups within each system. Similar membership is required for a woman. A man shares with all his children his membership of the male side of his mother's matrilineal group, and shares with his sons membership of the male side of his father's patrilineal group. His daughters belong to his father's patrilineal group but to its female side. He does not transmit to his children membership of his father's matrilineal group or his mother's patrilineal group.(1) This is illustrated by the diagram on page 21.

601 *Kinship terminology*

Patterns of behaviour between all blood relatives find their prototypes in the household. The following list of kinship terms is selected from the more detailed list given by Childs.(2)

Term		*Reciprocal*
nai	mother, mother's sister, etc.	*omolenge*
tate	father, father's brother, etc.	*omolenge*
tatekai	("female father") -father's sister	*ocimumbo cenge*
mamu	mother's brother	*ocimumbo cenge*
huvenge	elder brother or sister, and male or female parallel cousin, if older than ego	*nanjenge*
kota	eldest brother (of family or household)	*nanjenge*
(epalume	male or female cross-cousin	*epalume, upalume,*
(upalume		*or cepua*
(cepua		
nuhai	sister or female parallel cousin (M.S.)(3)	*nuhai*
nbuale	" " " " (F.S.)	*nbuale*
neikulu	grandmother, grandparents' sister	*onekulu yenge*
sekulu	grandfather, grandparents' brother	*onekulu yenge*

Note: (a) There is no word used exclusively for "brother" by a man, although a woman may use *nuhai* in this sense. *Huvenge* and *nanjenge* are used by either men or women for elder or younger brothers or sisters.

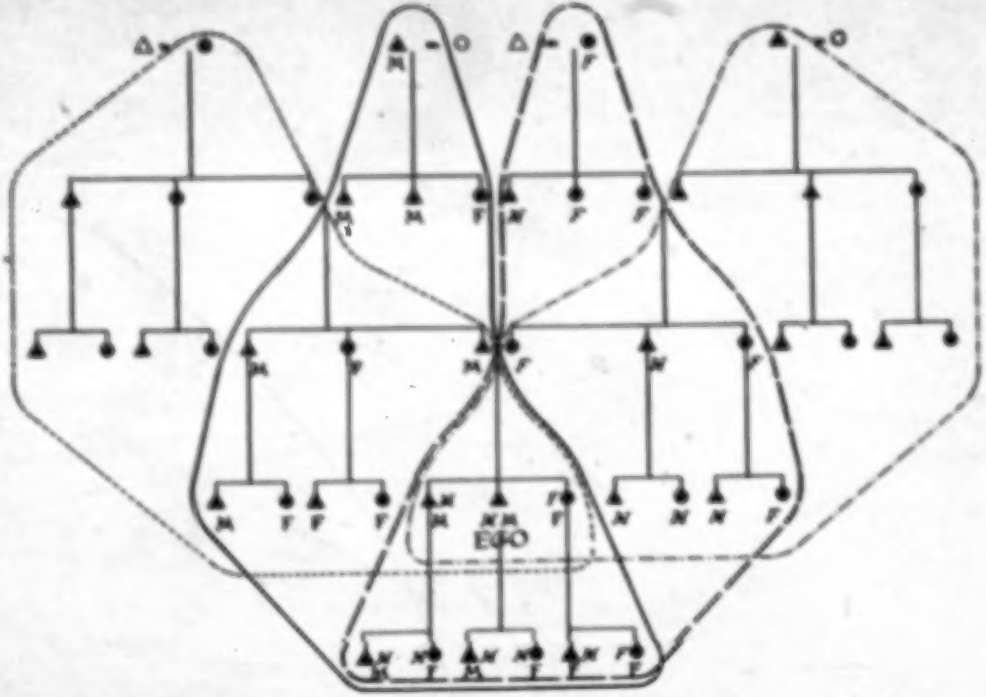
(b) *neikulu* and *sekulu* are sometimes used interchangeably for persons of either sex.

MARRIAGE

582 *Marriage within the kin group*

The most desirable marriage is marriage within the circle of kin, i.e. (as noted above) into the male line of the *oluine* or the female line of the *oluse*. (There appears to be a preference for marriage within the *oluine*.(4)) One may not marry one classed as brother, sister, father, mother, grandparent, child or grandchild, for such a union would involve

(1) This paragraph is largely quoted from Barnes, loc.cit.
(2) pp.47-9.
(3) M.S. = man speaking, W.S. = woman speaking.
(4) Childs, op.cit., p.53, note 3.



EGOS 4 KIN GROUPS. 1.—·—·Ohuse. M-Male side. F-female side.
2.—··—··Ohuira. M-Male side. F-female side. 3 — — Mothers paternal kin. 4 ····Fathers maternal kin. (Male and female sides for 3 & 4 not shown.)

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601 ocisumbo (since Childs states (p.35) that it includes every relative of the generation of the spouse's parents.) *Ndatembo* must avoid: (i) speaking each other's names. This may be accomplished by using the names compounded from those of children (thus *Nakombotio* and *Sakombotio* are the father and mother of Kombotia) or by using the terms which one's spouse uses, i.e. *nai, tate, amau* etc. (ii) seeing each other, if they are of opposite sex; if it is necessary to converse, it must be done out of sight, or with gaze averted. (iii) eating with each other. (This applies only to regular meals and not to casual refreshment.)

607 (c) The term *nawa* is used reciprocally for all the spouse's relatives of one's own generation, including those classed as "sister", "brother" and "cross-cousin". Between the *nawa* the only avoidance enjoined is that they may not eat regular meals in each other's presence; otherwise they are on "free and easy" terms".

"Avoidance of meeting ... is especially difficult for the bride who comes to live in a village of her husband's people, a large proportion of the men of which may be *ndatembo* to her. The prohibition may be lifted by .. a simple ceremony, in which each rubs a little oil on the other ... Avoidance of eating in each other's presence may be done away with after some months by sacrificing a chicken and feeding it ceremonially .. to the *ndatembo* or *nawa* ... It is especially important that the ceremonies be carried through with respect *(esumbilo)*."(1)

A note on the kinship system

613 421 178 There is a tendency today for the claims of the *oluse*, the land-owning group, to supplant those of the property-owning *oluina*; one important reason for this is the change from trade to agriculture as the most important economic activity. With European influence also conflicts have arisen over rights to children. Childs states(2) that the bilineal kinship system has been a factor leading to social stability, especially stability of marriage, but he does not elaborate this statement.

LOCAL GROUPS(3)

582 585 *The "household"*, consisting of a man, his wife or wives and children, and such other related or unrelated dependants as may be attached to this basic group, is the basis of the village. The word *enjo* (house) may be used for this group, i.e. to include the various houses which a man may have established by marriage, or it may be used for the house of any one of his wives. Each wife has her own hut, granary, chickens, and fields for her children and herself, and the husband has no house of his own unless he is village headman or the head of an *oluina*, in which case he has [591] a spirit-hut *(etembo)* in which he may sometimes pass the night. Sons when they marry form their own households, usually in their father's village. The size of the household varies greatly according to wealth and [554] status. Some recent kings have had as many as 12 wives. But it has been noted above that, in Childs' typical village, out of 48 households only 10

(1) Childs, p.52.
(2) Ibid., p.56; see also ibid. pp.70, 45, 50 etc.
(3) This section is based on Childs, 1949, pp.25-41.

621 The total number of households is 44, or 48 including those of the four
592 section heads. It should be noted that there is a discrepancy in Child's
114 figures (apart from an obvious misprint):[1] in another context he writes that section B contains only 12 houses (not even *households*), while from this table it would appear that section B has 15 household heads, including that of the section head; and section C is said to have 6 households, while only 4 (again counting the section head) are accounted for in this table.

591 Childs states[2] that the incidence of patrilocal marriage in Ngendo
114 is fairly typical of Umbundu country, but unfortunately gives little information regarding the relationship of the various spouses to each other or concerning the location of the villages from which they came. Matrilocal marriage is recognised as a possibility: of the three relatives by marriage listed above, one was a husband of a daughter of the headman, another the widow of a younger brother of the headman, who should have been inherited by a younger brother (?) or a mother's brother of the deceased, or, failing that, could have returned to her father's village. Of those listed above as sisters' children, two were widows who had come to live in the village with their mother's brothers.[3]

POLITICAL STRUCTURE

The village headman[4]

622 The village headman *(sekulu yimbo)* is also the head of the *olusa*
793 which forms the nucleus of the village group, and is related agnatically to most of the householders. He alone may speak of the village as *imbo*
782 *liange* (my village); the heads of sections, who are also called *sekulu*[5] may speak possessively only of their own sections *(ocitiwilo cange)*, and other villagers speak only of "our village" *(imbo lietu)*.[6] The headman functions as both priest and legal head of the village. As priest he has in his compound the *etumbo* (spirit hut), in which the insignia of office are kept, and in which he prays to the ancestral spirits. Upon occasion he may sleep there, usually offering a prayer to the spirits when he wakes during the night. The *etumbo* may also be [34L] used as a lodging place for respected guests, or as a store-house for possessions not used every day. Childs states that he officiates at regular village worship, including agricultural festivals; Hambly adds that he may lead the people in offering sacrifices when epidemics of ● 613 sickness break out in the village. It has been noted above[7] that it is the function of the *olusa* head to lead such rituals when illness occurs within the *olusa*. In general the village head is responsible for [622] matters - particularly agriculture and public health - which affect the whole village; individuals, both for protection and for help and other

(1) Childs, op.cit., p.28, line 27, where "twenty-four" should read "forty-four".
(2) On the basis of the 192 genealogies and 74 marriage-schedules which he collected. He does not, unfortunately, give examples or show how the comparison was made.
(3) Based on Childs, op.cit., pp.25-31.
(4) This section is based on Childs, op.cit., pp.36-7.
(5) It has been noted above that *sekulu* is used for all men (and some women) of the grandfather's generation.
(6) op.cit., p.[illegible].
(7) p.38.

advancement, will go to the head of their olaine to ask for his intercession with the spirits.(1)

As legal head of the village, the ockulu yimbo presides over both the more serious cases, which are held before the whole village on the dance-floor, and the simpler ones, which require the attendance only of those concerned, together with their respective elders, and may be taken up either in the *onjango* or in the headman's own courtyard. Hambly seems to suggest that all the section-heads sat with the village headman as a kind of council, but does not give details. He states also that the olosekulu (sing. *sekulu*) of the village formerly had charge of trials for murder, theft, adultery, and arguments over land,(2) and points out that they were more active in the legal system than the chiefs.(3) This is even more true today, when the village court of justice continues to function in spite of political and administrative changes, although the offices of chiefs and to some extent of sub-chiefs have largely decayed.

Other functions of the village headman include: the distribution of land to the various families when new village sites are opened;(4) the direction of the communal fire-hunts;(5) and, today, the collecting of taxes from the villagers and the direction and organisation of labour to work on the roads.(6) But however numerous the headman's official duties, he usually finds some time to attend to his own affairs, whether he is a farmer, hunter, or trader.(7)

Succession to headmanship is usually from father to son or from elder to younger brother, "with only as much recognition of primogeniture as belongs to the general ... hierrarchy of age."(8) Succession is, however, affected by the "democratic" tendencies in succession to chieftainship.(9)

*The Chief (*ocoma or sova*)*(10)

The Ovimbundu are grouped in 22 chiefdoms, of which half were in the past generally tributary to the more powerful chiefs.(11) At the same time each chiefdon had its separate government and could be considered as a unit in itself. Effective European occupation and direct rule have atrophied the chiefly office among the Ovimbundu, until today chiefs survive as little more than "living museum pieces".(12) Childs(13) enumerates the functions of the chiefly office as follows:

(a) *Religious.* The chief's ancestral spirits were the principal chiefdom deities, and the king was high-priest as well as the visible "vice-regent and incarnation" of the spirits.

(1) Childs, personal communication.
(2) The maternal uncle is responsible for settling disputes over property which occur within the olaine. (Hambly op.cit., p.206).
(3) Ibid. (4) Ibid.
(5) Cashman, op.cit., p.115. (6) Ibid., p.121.
(7) Childs, op.cit., p.36. (8) Ibid., p.44.
(9) Ibid.
(10) Ocoma means chief or king. *Soma* is the personalized form used with the name. This the Portuguese variously have corrupted into sova or soba. (Childs, personal communication)
(11) See above, p.2.
(12) Childs, op.cit., p.20. (13) Ibid.

769 They intimate their wishes to their descendants only through slight illness, usually asking for honour to be paid to them by a feast, or by some descendant carrying on their profession.

Ocende is the spirit of the much-honoured founder of the family,(1) and is always beneficent, bringing good fortune and warning his descendants of danger. Hambly and Tucker agree that *Ekisi* is the same kind of spirit as *Ocende* (although Hambly does not give *Ocende* this special meaning). Tucker writes that *Ekisi* is a benevolent spirit who calls the villagers together at night, and gives them advice through a medium (?), whom he enters without the latter's going into the usual trance. *Kandundu* according to Tucker is an *ekisi* who holds the leading position among the ancestral spirits owing to his seniority. Hambly describes a shrine to *Kandundu* at Bailundu; anyone who sees the contents of the shrine is supposed to become blind. He writes that *Kandundu* is thought of as "the spirit of dreaming who makes swellings on the body", but gives no further explanation. According to Tucker *Kandundu* is an especially powerful *ondele*, and ceremonies performed for him have many distinctive features.

776 769 776 778 [553] Hunt, the spirit of the hunt, has his own shrine and priest in the village of the (paramount?) chief. His hut is very large, since all the meat of the hunts is placed in it. In front of it dances are held, and poles are decorated with skulls and other trophies of hunting. Before the door there is a carved figure of *Samaka*, the spirit who chases the game towards the hunter. A man whose ritual name is *Kapila*, and a woman called *Kumja*(2) are in charge of the spirit-hut of *Hunt*, and make supplication to him for success in hunting. Hunters living elsewhere but in an *onlolo* or head village do not have persons bearing these ritual names, but their dogs are often called *Hunt*, *Samaka*, *Kapilo* or *Kumja*.

775 754 The most dreaded spirits are the *otulopukupuko*, who may be spirits of still-born babies or foetuses, mental defectives, maltreated slaves, or persons, especially children, killed by sorcery. When a person has been found guilty of killing a child by sorcery or witchcraft, he is sentenced to "restore life" to it, which he does by substituting for it a child from his own family: if the deceased child is a girl, he must give an ox as well. The child is treated with great respect by his new family. If however the parents do not ask the sorcerer or witch for restitution, the child becomes an *okulupukupuko*, and may return to "eat" other children, at the command of the sorcerer who has killed it.

RITUAL

793 613 It has been noted that the village headman acts as priest for the *olusa*, the group of paternally-related persons who form the basis of the village group, while the head of the *olusa* acts as priest for his dispersed, maternally-related group.(3) There is little detailed information on the religious duties of these priests. Cushman(4) describes the village headman as making public prayers each morning to Suku. Childs however points out(5) that it is more usual for the headman to spend a

(1) i.e. of either the *olusa* or the *olusa*. (Childs, personal communication)
(2) According to Childs, (1949, p.21) *Kumja* is a hunting goddess.
(3) See above, p.29.
(4) 1944, p.51. (5) Personal communication.

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night in the *ombala* praying to or communing with ancestral spirits, when the occasion arises; Suku is regarded as too remote to receive prayers.

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While cooking, a woman may spill a little meal on the ground for the spirits; at a meal, a person may spill a little food or beer for the same purpose. A portion of the meat at a feast may likewise be sacrificed, but it is often a less desirable portion, such as the intestines.(1)

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Agricultural rituals were held before planting, at which time the headman and his wife had intercourse in their field and sacred seed from the chief's granary was distributed, a few grains to be mixed with the seed to be planted on each plot. When the maize began to ripen a few ears were sent to the chief before any were eaten.(2)

DIVINING(3)

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The word *ocimbanda* is used both for a diviner and for a maker of medicines. To distinguish the two, the diviner may be called *ocimbanda congundo* ("of the basket"), the herbalist *ocimbanda cuviti* ("of trees or sticks"). Some practitioners are both diviner and herbalist. A female diviner is called *combula*.(4) An *ocimbanda* frequently specialises in a certain kind of case;(5) and among the members of the profession there are many degrees of proficiency. One may work only in his own village, another may be consulted on matters of concern to the whole district or chiefdom; others go on professional journeys carrying their baskets, and accumulate profits in animals and cloth. The greater the reputation of the diviner, the greater the charges he makes for his services.

The tasks of the *ocimbanda* are:-

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(a) To discover the cause of sickness, death, or any evil which has befallen the individual or the community. Sickness and death are always believed to be due either to the workings of spirits who are demanding sacrifices, or to living enemies who have malicious spirits under their control or who have bought potent charms. The diviner, after consulting the spirit who speaks in and through his basket, names the spirit who is causing the trouble and tells the victim what its demands are, or, if the enemy is a living person, indicates in a general manner from whence the trouble comes, *e.g.* to a woman "Your baskets are too well made; you are hated because of them", or, to a man, "This illness was found on a journey taken to collect a debt". If requested, the diviner makes a counter-charm to offset that which has caused the ill.

(b) To interpret omens and dreams.

(c) To give advice on personal problems.

(d) To dispense medicines and charms.

(e) To bring or withhold rain, or to see who is guilty of withholding it. [789]

(1) Ibid., see also Cashmore, loc.cit.
(2) Childs, personal communication.
(3) Based on Tucker, 1948.
(4) Dunbly, (3) 1904.
(5) Ibid.

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Kukululu or *ukululu*. These terms are applicable to my father's father's brother, my father's father's brother's wife; my father's father's sister's husband; and my mother's father (the reciprocal *ovakulu* describes the reciprocals, brother's son's son; husband's brother's son's son; wife's brother's son's son; daughter's son). 601

Mukulu. This designation, which is derived from *wai*, meaning mother, and *kulu*, an old person, is applied to my father's mother (reciprocal, *ovakulu yanye*, son's son). *Mukulu* also means my father's father's sister; my mother's mother; my mother's mother's brother's wife; and my mother's mother's sister (the reciprocal is *ovakulu* which equals the English reciprocals brother's son's son; daughter's son; husband's daughter's child; and sister's daughter's child).

This completes the second generation of ascendants.

NOTE: Ngunga's wife uses the names *mukulu* and *kukululu* for those relatives of her husband to whom Ngunga himself applies these terms. These relatives call Ngunga's wife *ovakulu*.

TABLE D

(See Table E IV and V, also Table F II, IV and V)

SONS OF NGUNGA'S DESCENDANTS

Nuvala or *useli* is my first-born son. Other sons are *omolo*, meaning child. *Omolo alume* means a male child. *Omolo akui* is a female child. *Useli* also means a first daughter (the reciprocal for these terms is *tate*, meaning father).

Omolange means my child. I apply the word, not only to my own children, but to my elder brother's son (reciprocal, *tate*, father's younger brother); to my elder brother's daughter; and to my younger brother's son.

Ndatembo. The word is applied to my son's wife; my daughter's husband; my elder brother's son's wife; my elder brother's daughter's husband; and my younger brother's son's wife (the same word *ndatembo* is used for the reciprocals of these terms; namely, husband's father; wife's father; husband's father's younger brother; wife's father's younger brother; and husband's father's elder brother).

The foregoing classificatory system of relationship is not peculiar to the Ovimbundu, but is a cultural trait of many Bantu-speaking and some Sudanic-speaking Negroes. The similarity of the Umbundu system to those of surrounding peoples in Rhodesia and the Congo will be pointed out in chapters dealing with culture contacts. 601 171

When describing marriage rites reference was made to the fact that a wife goes to live near her husband's relatives; the system is therefore patrilocal. The limited family consists of husband and wife (or wives) with their children. The greatest number of wives observed in the family of a commoner was four, and in the family of a king eleven. A household sometimes contains adopted children, also domestic slaves (pawns) who are working to pay off debts for their maternal uncles. An extended family may include a grandfather and his wife, his sons, their wives and children, and his unmarried daughters, with classes and nomenclatures mentioned in the foregoing tables. 591 592 [595] [597] [567] 596

The phrase *epata lia tate* (or *alua*) means "family of my father" and includes all relatives on the father's side. The words *epata lia* 613

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613 *nasi* (or *olusisa*) mean "family of my mother." These terms seem to indicate a bilateral rather than a unilateral lineage. Inquiry did not show that there were totems for the mother's or the father's people, or that marriage into any particular local group was com-
631 manded or enjoined. A village is a unit under the administration of a chief (*sekulu*) and as such is part of a large group of villages forming a kingdom ruled by a king (*seeso*), but such village units are concerned with government and warfare, not with exogamy.

613 565 In tracing descent an Ocimbundu gives the names of relatives of both the father and mother, but commoners are unlikely to know the names of their relatives beyond the grandparent class. The children of a king were at one time able to recite many generations
[582] of ancestors along both parental lines. But if the king had married a commoner, as he was allowed to do after choosing his first wife from the royal line, the children knew only the genealogy of their father. This is obvious since the commoner mother would not be likely to know her line of descent. The son of a village chief (*sekulu*) may marry a commoner, but, according to Ngonga, the *sekulu*, his father, "would have a very good look at her."

582 565 Ngonga had not heard of the marriage of brothers and sisters, not even in the royal family; the idea of such a union was new and repulsive to him. In Umbundu society there would be no necessity for such a marriage as that of brother and sister or other close relative, because members of a royal family of one part of the country could intermarry with members of a royal family in some area far away. There might, for example, be marriages between the royal families of Bailundu and Ngalangi, which are two principal kingships of the Ovimbundu confederacy.

835 684 When asked what would be the fate of a man who committed incest with his blood daughter or uterine sister, Ngonga said he would be killed by his brother or by his mother's brother. If he escaped he would have to go far away so that his people could never see him again. If a fine were accepted for incest, the culprit would have to pay his own kin "because he had shamed them."

601 Table A, Ngonga's Own Generation, calls attention to a plurality of terms for brother and sister according to the relative ages of the speaker and the person addressed. Moreover, there is a term for direct address and another which is used when speaking of a brother or sister.

Ngonga was questioned with regard to forms of address for his brothers and sisters other than the children of his uterine mother.

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not now possible for field work to supply the gaps in the written material.[73]

The traditional kinship system had neither clans nor segmenting lineages. The patrilineal group (*oluse*) was localized in a village, the group head being at the same time a village headman. Patrilineal ties do not seem to have been recognized between villages.[73] This social independence of the agnatically united village was reflected in the surrounding palisade, in the close clustering of the houses (nowadays much more spread out) and in the village institutions of the dancing-floor and the men's house (*ondjango*). It was here that all the men and boys, from seven or eight up, ate. Hastings writes, 'Each woman, after preparing the meal, takes or sends the portion which is for the male members of her family. This food is common property. As soon as enough has arrived some responsible member among the men will have it divided among the boys. For days a man may never taste of the food which is prepared by his wife.'[74] The men's house was also a club, and a court-room, where minor cases were decided. It was through this localized body of patrikin that an individual claimed land and residence rights and through it that he participated in the political system.[75]

The matrilineal group (the *oluina*) was composed of the descendants of a common great-great-grandmother.[76] According to Childs, it had a head who might also at times be a village headman,[77] and it was presumably the matrilineal group head who settled the disputes over property which Hambly says

[73] For an attempt at reconstructing Umbundu kinship on the basis of Childs's book see J. A. Barnes's review of *Umbundu Kinship and Character* in *Man*, 1950, pp. 126–128. It may be mentioned that the terms 'the side of the bow' and 'the side of the basket' are used simply to mean 'patrilateral kin' and 'matrilateral kin' (Dr. Childs, private information, and my own inquiries).

[74] A rather ambiguous phrase in Childs p. 43 ('The *olue* consists of a large number of local village groups'), which might be interpreted as meaning that villages were patrilineally grouped into clans, seems really to mean simply that the village is the *olue* unit.

[75] Hastings, p. 77.

[76] Ibid., p. 16. Childs, pp. 43–44.

[77] Hastings, p. 83, states that the matrilineal group consists of the descendants of a common great-great-great-grandmother (that is, five generations), and on p. 91 says that it consists of a group 'linked by a common great-great-grandmother'.

[77] Childs, p. 44.

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could be resolved in the matrilineal group.[78] Hastings, who gives the most detailed account of the matrilineal groups, which he calls sibs, tells us, 'There can be no exaction of fines or taking of slaves between the members of a sib group—the group members are supposed to pay each other's debts, and one who has wealth and refuses so to communicate may be secretly poisoned by the others. It is within the group of matrilineal sibs that most compacts, whether social or economic, are formed and operate. The same is true even of malevolent plots and anti-social practices, such as killing by witchcraft.'[79]

Clearly, the matrilineal groups in which the rich had to pool their wealth with poorer kinsfolk and in which trading arrangements[80] were made indicate the adaptation of the kinship system to the needs of the trade. It may be suggested that one of the functions of the double descent system was to separate the fields of village and chiefdom relations, established through patrilineal ties, from the field of commerce, credit, and the inheritance of wealth gained by trade. Thus the conflicts in which a man would be involved in one set of relations would not involve his other set of ties, and this distribution of stresses must have limited the strains set up by disputes. The distinction between the local group and the commercial group would also prevent heavy losses from trade striking a whole village simultaneously.[81] The credit institutions demanded by a trading system in which debt was frequently incurred were fitted into the kinship system, and associated with a device for levelling those who had become prosperous in the trade.

Unhappily the disintegration of the traditional social structure, and the accompanying loss of knowledge of it, prevented me from adding to, or even corroborating entirely, the written material on the form of the matrilineal groups.[82] It is not at all evident how the groups maintained integration, or how new

[78] Hambly, p. 200.

[79] Ibid., p. 92.

[80] Dr. Childs suggested to me that the core of the caravans might be composed of kin. However, the caravans were so large that they clearly could not be organised on a kinship basis. See also Serpa Pinto, p. 185.

[81] This point was suggested to me by Dr. Mary Douglas.

[82] I did not obtain any information on the size of the matrilineal group, the existence of heads of the groups, and the degree to which it was a congregation.

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groups emerged. The information on the cult of the matrilineal spirits which might have thrown some light on matrilineal conflicts and integration, is confused. Both Hastings and Mrs. Tucker state that the matrilineal spirits are always malevolent, but this is not confirmed by my informants,[83] and it may be that they were referring to the traditional belief that sorcery was only practised between members of a matrilineal group. Although, as has been stated, a man looked to his matrilineal kin for economic aid, he might travel with his father (who had first claim on his services), or with his mother's brother or some other kinsman; indeed while his father was still alive he might travel and trade on his own account.[84] The matrilineal group (in this area at least) was not a unit from which trading teams were formed, but rather a means for providing financial assistance when needed for those engaged in trading. It is of course possible that in some areas of Umbundu country the matrilineal kin groups were significant in the organization of trading caravans.

Another institution whose form can be described but whose function cannot be properly known is that of preferential marriage with certain categories of kin. Childs states that the categories were cross-cousins (both patrilateral and matrilateral), the sister's daughter, and the father's sister, and indicates that the cross-cousin marriages were not generally with first-cousins. My informants generally denied that it had been permitted to marry a father's sister, but confirmed his other statements. They added that an indemnification was paid by the bridegroom to the bride's family 'to cut the blood',[85] and that the kinship terms were replaced by affinal. This suggests that these marriages may have been intended to restore distant kinship ties by turning them into affinal ties and so renewing them for the next generation, but how this would operate cannot even be guessed.

[83] Hastings, p. 87; L. S. Tucker, 'The Divining Basket of the Ovimbundu', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 1940, pp. 171–201.

[84] Informants.

[85] This was paid down to 1949 or so in the area where I was. It was about 20 escudos, much less than bridewealth. It was formerly referred to by the Umbundu term for 'fine' (*osimbu*), as was the payment made on the death of a non-kinswoman with.

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THE OVIMBUNDU UNDER TWO SOVEREIGNTIES

It was then the father who normally exercised authority over a boy, and on the father's death a child or youth would join the household of a father's brother. Yet the right of a sister's son to the inheritance of the movable property and to grants from his mother's brother was counterbalanced by the latter's right to sell his uterine nephew into slavery, a fate from which the father could save his son by ransoming him, in which case the mother's brother would no longer have this right.[86] In this society, the mother's brother—sister's son relationship was fundamentally an economic one, in which the sister's son received assistance in the trade and inherited his uncle's gains in this trade, but could himself be transformed into a source of capital.

I now summarize the evidence on Umbundu social control and its relation with the trading economy. It is clear that the Ovimbundu belonged to the number of those African societies with pyramidal[87] political systems and formal codes and courts of law, even though there exists uncertainty as to the relative power of the kingdoms and the sub-chiefdoms. Social control also operated through the kinship system, authority at the village level being in the hands of the head of the patrilineal group backed by the public opinion expressed in the men's house, and the dispersed matrilineal groups having sanctions in the right of sale of a sister's son and in the accusations of sorcery brought against those who failed to use wealth to aid their relatives. For the caravan trade to have attained the importance it did there must also have existed something of a *pax Umbunduca* stimulated by the existence of such ties as that between *tjisoko* partners and the 'international' hospitality shown to diviners, hunters, and smiths. Evidence of this *pax Umbunduca* is provided by the organization of caravans, and by the establishment of marriage ties between persons in different kingdoms, and between different royal houses.[88] However, warfare was not unknown between the different

[86] Childs, p. 44, and my informants.

[87] See Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, Introduction to *African Political Systems*.

[88] Hastings (p. 1) notes a marriage between the daughter of a king of Bie and Ekwikwi, king of Bailundo (1876–93). Childs (p. 171) notes that Kalukukusu, king of Ndulu, was a sister's son of a king of Bailundo.

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114 One anthropologist, Mr. W.D. Hambly, and two missionaries

with anthropological knowledge and interests, Dr. Daniel A. Hastings and Dr. Gladwyn Murray Childs, have written on Umbundu kinship.[3] Mr. Hambly's main interest was in material culture and the conditions of his fieldwork were not such as to give him much evidence on the kinship system.[4] Both Dr. Hastings and Dr. Childs recognized the central importance of kinship in Umbundu social life, but have outlined the kinship ties and kinship groups rather than given a detailed analysis.

602 Mr. Hambly states that 'The phrase *Epata Lia Tate* (or *Oluse*) means "family of my father" and includes all relatives on the father's side. The words *Epata Lia Mai* (or *Oluina*) mean "family of my mother".'[5] This could mean that the Umbundu kinship system is bilateral. He states that inheritance is matrilineal and marriage virilocal, a situation consistent with such a matrilineal kinship system as that of the Bakongo.[6]

613 622 Dr. Hastings, whose thesis was completed the year before the publication of Hambly's book, makes it clear that there are two sets of kin groups. 'Over each village is a ruling elder who is the head of the kinship group of that village since all who reside in the village are generally related to him and to each other patrilineally. This elder, greatly revered, is considered the patriarch of that local group. Residence being patrilocal, [591] the office of an elder is hereditary through the male line.'[7] He 613 then goes on to contrast with this, 'the matrilineal sib to which each member is linked, though he may be living in a village away from his sib group.'[8] This group is a clearly defined

[3] Works cited in footnotes to Chapter I. There is a typescript of Hastings's thesis in the library of the International African Institute, London.

[4] Mr. Hambly spent five months in the country, and used as his interpreter and main informant an English-speaking Otjimbundu. He seems simply to have visited villages without living in them. Dr. Childs and Dr. Hastings had both spent several years as 'bush' missionaries. Dr. Childs had actually taken over from Dr. Hastings work in the area to the north-west of Bailundo in the direction of Bimbe, and had subsequently obtained information in Cassongue. He later obtained a good deal of material from African pastors, teachers and schoolboys.

[5] Hambly, pp. 191–2.

[6] For the Bakongo see the discussion by A. I. Richards, in Radcliffe-Brown and Forde, pp. 213–21. Anthropologists have more than once suggested to the author that the Umbundu system was not of the 'double-descent' category but some combination of virilocal marriage and matrilineal descent.

[7] Hastings, p. 16.

[8] Ibid.

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social unit. 'All descendants of the same great-great-grandmother speak of themselves as a group (matrilineally descended), by the term *Imolietu*, i.e. "children from a common source".'[9] Dr. Hastings did not apply the concept of double-descent to this society but regarded it as being matrilineal with patrilineal trimmings. After noting the patrilineal succession to the chiefdom, virilocal residence after marriage, and social preference for patrilineal kinsman, Dr. Hastings states: 'Apart from these apparent indications which might mislead one into concluding that the Ovimbundu are patronymic [*sic*], every other behaviour is obviously linked up as far as social attitudes and relations of the living are concerned within the matrilineal sib.'[10]

The neat tabulation by Dr. Childs[11] of the functions of the two kin groups, when considered in conjunction with the passages cited from Hastings, seems to provide quite clear proof that it is correct to apply the category 'double-descent kinship system' to that formerly prevailing among the Ovimbundu.

2. *Kinship Terms*

Tate *So* *Iso*	my father your father his father	Extended to all brothers, real or classificatory, of a father, all men married to a 'mother', and to the father's sister's son, particularly if he has been your father's heir.
Mai *Nyoho* *Ina*	my mother your mother his mother	Extended to all sisters, real or classificatory, of a mother, and to all wives of any 'father'.
Sekulu	mother's brother	Extended to any brother, real or classificatory, of a mother, and to the husband of any *apahai*.
Apahai[12] *Sohai*	my father's sister, his father's sister, your father's sister	Extended to any sister of any father and the wife of any *sekulu*.

[9] Ibid., p. 83. *Imolietu* actually means 'our womb'.
[10] Ibid., p. 87.
[11] Childs, pp. 45–46.
[12] *Tatekai* (father-woman), used in other parts of Umbundu country for 'my father's sister', is not found in Gumba.

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slave. Once ransomed a boy could not be sold again. If, however, the father was displeased with his son's behaviour he could refuse to ransom him. When a man died, his adolescent sons would go to the household of a classificatory father and the children who did not yet 'have sense' would go with the widow to her kin, returning to their agnatic kin when they were older.

4. *Analysis of the Old Kinship System*

The ethnography of the Ovimbundu does show that there existed a double-descent kinship system, each individual belonging to both a local patrilineal group, and a dispersed matrilineal group, in which movable property is inherited. So great has been the impact of social change that not only have these groups disappeared but it is practically impossible to gain additional information on them by direct questions about their nature and functions. The information on kinship norms does give a somewhat clearer picture.

Within the village there was a very strong emphasis on the unity and solidarity of the men of the village. The men's house was the main social centre of the village where the men ate, received guests, and listened to cases. It was about it rather than about the person of the headman that ritual clustered.[20] The elementary family was not the unit of domestic consumption, and it is clear, from the taboos regarding contact with women kin, and the evidence as to the social life of the man's house that there was little recreational contact between the sexes. The concept of *ondjamba*[21] shows that the elementary family of husband, wife, and children, was morally and ritually significant, but many of the educational, nutritive, and recreational functions frequently associated with it were here attached to the men's house.

The strength of the agnatic ties in this society seems to have lain in the solidarity of the men of the village rather than in the patriarchal authority of fathers over sons. A son was economically independent of his father since he could trade on his own while his father was still living; the most powerful social sanction in the hands of kinsmen, that of being sold as a slave, was

[20] For these rituals see Hastings, pp. 73–76, and Childs, p. 39.
[21] *Ondjamba* will be discussed more fully in the next chapter.

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in the hands of the mother's brother, though the father could, if he wished, intervene; and a man could establish a shrine of his own while his father lived.

It is not altogether easy to see how the matrilineal group maintained its cohesion. It was not the working team on which the caravan trade operated since a man's father had first claim on his services, and he could travel with other relatives. Within it alone loans need not be repaid and accusations of sorcery were made; with this in mind, it is evident why, as Dr. Hastings tells us, people tended to avoid the company of their matrikin, and why most disputes arose in the matrilineal groups.[22] It seems that probably the key to the functioning of the matrilineal groups lies in the details, not now recoverable, of the economy of the caravan trade. As everybody, however successful, was in danger at some time or another of incurring heavy losses,[23] an arrangement by which anybody who was in difficulties could call on his kin for help would be generally acceptable. The association of mutual aid of this sort with matrilineal rather than patrilineal kin would spread losses geographically and would exclude conflicts over currency and movable property from village life. Moreover, the dispersal of the matrilineal kin would provide an individual with business contacts over a considerable area.

5. *Contemporary Kinship Norms*

Much of this has disappeared. The men's house is no longer the dining-room of the village male population. Men now often eat with their wives and children though attitudes and practice of this vary between households. People in their twenties knew of the existence of these avoidance rules but it seems that the rules forbidding sons to eat with their mother and eldest sons and daughters to eat with their father are now generally ignored.

[22] Hastings, pp. 18, 87. Disputes within the matrilineal group could be, and very often were, referred to the sub-chief and king. The account of legal proceedings in Hastings (pp. 139–51) suggests that a high proportion of the cases heard by the kings were to do with sorcery. In such cases the social extension of the matrilineal group beyond the area of the sub-chiefdom and the wider political integration achieved by the kingdoms 'co-operated' in preserving a range of social relations beyond the sub-chiefdom.

[23] Apropos of losses Childs quotes Magyar as saying that the Ovimbundu traded for excitement rather than gain (p. 204).

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602 183 the same time clearly an important part of social life. Kinship norms are confused, as is the correct term to use in a particular relationship. Ritual and jural sanctions are lacking, as are institutions based on the regular co-operation of groups of kinsmen. Yet a man likes to live with kinsfolk and there is a tendency for kin to cluster together in a neighbourhood.

602 621 By the very facts, that so many of a man's neighbours are his kinsmen, and that there is very little marked differentiation between the behaviour towards different categories of kin, kinship is robbed of any great specificity of content. It might be said that it is the quantity rather than the quality of kinship ties that makes kinship significant in establishing a 'sense of community' in a neighbourhood, in that the multiplicity of local kin ties creates some identification between a man's range of kin and his neighbourhood. At the same time a kinship tie provides a basis on which a closer relationship may be built by reciprocal services. It appears that the inheritance of property 602 428 recognizes kinship in this way by recognizing claims not on the basis of strict genealogical proximity but on the quality of the relationship.

128 A discussion of marriage and the household must be left to the next chapter. The outline given of the present kinship system is sufficiently clear to begin an examination of the reasons for the changes. This must rely to some extent on speculation, owing to a lack of information on the actual working of the kinship system while it was in transition to its present form.

613 178 The key change is the disappearance of the kinship groups. These, it seems, disappeared because of their high degree of dependence on the particular type of economy existing before 1911. It has already been argued that the distinction between the patrikin and the matrikin is an attempt to isolate economic claims and conflicts from village and political relationships, and that the giving of loans without right of repayment within the matrikin was called for by a trading system in which credit played an important part. With the end of the trade the wealth passing through Umbundu hands declined sharply, and there was neither need for funds to meet trading losses nor currency to provide them. A man obtained money either by growing crops

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helped by his wife and children or by going out to work. Neither means of making money involves regular co-operation with a body of kinsmen. The occasional co-operation needed in situations of financial crisis or mutual help for some particular job can be provided by those of a man's numerous kinsfolk with whom he has established ties of amity above the mere recognition of relationship.[32]

The disappearance of the matrilineal group was a logical consequence of the disappearance of its *raison d'être*. With the disappearance of the matrilineal group, there was no longer any need to preserve the distinctive nature of the agnatic group. It is quite possible to suppose that the village might have preserved its patrilineal base if other factors had come into play. Such possible factors would be a shortage of land, danger of attack from enemies, or the use by the headman of his political power to keep control over his patrikin.[33]

A question of some significance arises from the differences of attitude to a man's 'fathers' and to his 'mother's brothers' which has been noted earlier on. From the literature it might seem that the link between agnates was very strong, and that it is surprising that it should have broken up so completely. It may be suggested that the unity of agnatic kin was expressed in the idiom of relations between villagers rather than of relations between kin, and that within the village there was not necessarily much greater solidarity between siblings than between distant agnates. The solidarity of paternal siblings was then, granting this hypothesis, a reflection of the wider solidarity of the village. When the village disintegrated the close ties between brothers disintegrated also.

The unity of the matrikin was perhaps expressed to a much greater degree in a kinship idiom.[34] This is perhaps one of the

[32] The amount of aid an individual can mobilize in case of need depends to a very great extent on personal factors. It should be emphasized that it is personal co-operation over a number of years rather than any genealogical nearness that inclines a man to be helpful. While helpfulness to kinsfolk is a norm of Umbundu ethics, it is possible in practice to provide excuses for non-co-operation.

[33] The rapid disintegration of the indigenous system of authority after the middle thirties may reasonably be linked with the decay of agnatic ties of residence.

[34] 'When an Ocimbundu speaks of his family (*epata*) in the sense of a large and widespread organization with a recognized head in some elder, it is generally his *alaka* to which he refers.' Childs, p. 44.